

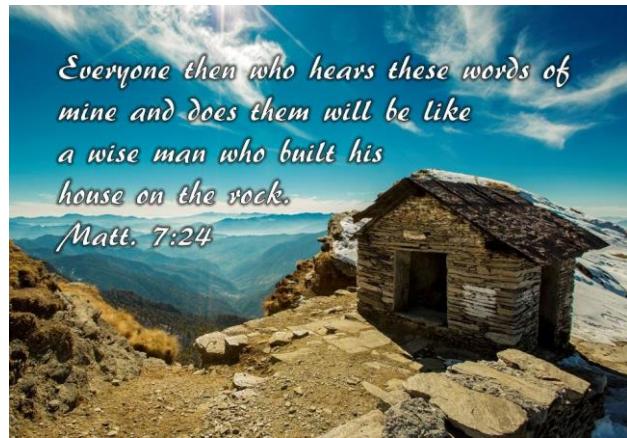
House on a Rock

June 13, 2018 | Pastor Dan

Matthew 7:24 Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. **25** And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. **26** And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. **27** And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.¹

Over the last several years, I have asked people to identify the “rock” mentioned in this parable of Jesus at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. Almost without fail, people have admitted that they do not know, they are not sure, or, most commonly, they have answered that the “rock” is Jesus.

This last answer is easy to understand, since we are so familiar with such sayings as “Jesus is the Rock of my salvation.”



[Picture Source](#)

Jesus, the Rock

Interestingly, the New Testament never directly refers to Jesus as “the rock of our salvation.” With one exception, when the New Testament refers to Jesus as a stone or a rock, the reference is to a foundation stone – a stone that is purposefully cut or selected for erecting a building.²

Therefore, the reference to Jesus as a stone or rock does not directly relate to salvation, but to the church. We find this idea included in Jesus’ reply to Peter’s confession in [Matthew 16:16](#), “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus replied in verse 18, “...upon this rock I will build my church.”

Paul expanded on this idea in his letter to the Ephesians when he explained that the church was “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.” ([Eph. 2:19-21](#))

We find the one exception to the use of the term “rock” in reference to Jesus in Paul’s letter to the church at Corinth.

During the sojourn of Israel to the Promised Land following the Exodus, God miraculously provided water from rock for the people to drink. ([Ex. 17:6; Num. 20:11](#))³ In the Hebrew, the

word rock might refer to a large rock or boulder, but typically referred to a cliff or a wall of rock, like the side of a mountain.

Paul wrote that this Rock was Jesus ([1 Cor. 10:4](#)). Since the water did not set the Israelites free, then the rock does not represent salvation, but sustenance. It represents, not the saving grace of God, but His sustaining and His securing grace – His ability and willingness to keep that which belongs to him and provide for their every need.

The Old Testament, on the other hand, makes several references to God the Father as the Rock of salvation.⁴

2 Sam. 22:47 *The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock, and exalted be my God, the rock of my salvation.*

Since we know that Jesus is God, then we are correct in identifying Jesus as that same Rock of our salvation. Just note that it comes from the Old Testament, not the New.

The Rock of Matthew 7

With that review in mind, let's go back to Matthew 7 and ask the question again. When Jesus refers to the rock in Matthew 7 (and again in Luke 6) to whom or what is He making reference?

To answer this question correctly requires that we pay very close attention to the context.

In chapters 5-7 of his gospel, Matthew records Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. In this, His longest recorded sermon, Jesus explains and illustrates the character of those who are part of the kingdom. He does not prescribe what a Christian ought to try to become, but describing what a Christian *will* become through the process of sanctification. However, He qualifies His description at the end of the sermon.

In verses 15-20 of Matthew 7, Jesus warns of false prophets whom the people may readily identify by their fruits. Jesus does not refer to their profession, but to that which is visible – to “the practical effect of their teaching.” According to the commentary of The Didache, “by their fruits” means “by their behavior.”⁵

According to Adam Clarke, “Fruits, in the Scripture and Jewish phraseology, are taken for works of any kind.” They are “the confession of his own heart.”⁶

In verse 21, Jesus makes a very powerful statement:

Matt. 7:21 *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' 23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'"*

If this reference proves nothing else, it proves that a profession of faith is not enough to prove that a person is a Christian. I once had a church member express quite angrily, “If a man says he’s a Christian, that is all that is required. I have no right to question him.”

Yet nothing could be farther from the truth.

On the Day of Judgment, there will be people who have convinced themselves of their own salvation who will find themselves in the grips of hell because all they had was a profession of faith with nothing to support their claim other than their own words.

That’s not only scary...It’s terribly sad!

In addition, these were not idle church members, satisfied with sitting on the sidelines. They were engaged in ministry and good works. This proves that works alone are not enough to prove one’s salvation. The works must be in accordance with the will of God.

This makes what Jesus has to say in the next four verses of Matthew 7 so critical.

When Jesus used the word “rock,” to whom or to what is He referring?

Part 2

Read verse 24 once again and ask, “What was it that this man did that caused Jesus to refer to him as ‘wise’?”

The answer? He built his house on a rock. But what rock?

Once again, almost everyone I have ever asked has identified the rock in this parable as Jesus.

But the context demonstrates that Jesus is not talking about belief in himself, but in works – in obedience.

The rock on which the wise man builds his security is obedience.

In verse 24, Jesus states positively, “Everyone who hears these words of mine **and does them** will be like a wise man...” Then in verse 26, He reiterates this thought negatively, “...everyone who hears these words of mine and **does not do them** will be like a foolish man...”

Clearly, the difference between the wise man and the foolish man is not their profession of faith in Jesus, but their obedience to the teachings and the commands of Jesus.

“He (Jesus) was speaking in the character of a wise Master-builder who saw in fervent faith and **unhesitating obedience** the ground-work on which the Christian society, which He designated as His kingdom, was to rest.”⁷ (Emphasis added.)



[Picture Source](#)

"By the similitude of two builders our Lord warns his followers that to have heard his words will have been useless unless they put them into practice...in the imagery the rock represents practice; the sand, mere sentiment...Assent is insufficient; there must be action...apart from practice, there is (ver. 23) no heart-union with Christ." ⁸

In other words, where there is no obedience to the commands of Christ – no life-application of the truths taught by the word of God – then there never was a salvation experience.

This takes us to the very core of why there is a plan of redemption in the first place. God is perfect and complete in every way. He needs nothing from us. In fact, He doesn't even need us.

God did not look down on Creation one day, see the unfortunate mess that man had gotten himself into, and then decide to rescue him. God rescues man for God's own glory and for the fulfillment of an eternal plan set into motion before the foundation of the world.

The entire plan of redemption is about God glorifying himself. We are simply the blessed recipients of a mysterious spiritual objective that God began in eternity past and will complete in eternity future. ⁹ Forgiveness, restoration, rescue from death and hell, peace, love, and joy, heaven, streets of gold...all these are the overflow of God's plan of redemption of which saved people are the beneficiaries.

But He saves us for good works. ([Eph. 2:10](#))

Somewhere along the line, this message has gotten lost in the teaching of the church. Too many Christians – or at least those who claim to be Christians – are convinced that everything in the gospel message is about humans. God loves us and has a plan for us. If we say a pre-fabricated prayer and invite Jesus into our hearts (neither of which can be supported by Scripture), then we've got our ticket and nothing else is required.

After all, salvation is about grace, not works. Right?

Church rosters are filled with people who have never done anything in relationship to the commands of Christ, yet if asked, would declare themselves to be members of the family of God. But listen to how Jesus defined the family of God.

Matt. 12:50 Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.

Point 1: A person not actively involved in fulfilling the commandments and the teaching of Jesus is not a part of the family of God.

Church members are very quick to declare themselves blessed, but who is it that is truly blessed by God? Once again, Jesus makes this very clear.

Luke 11:28 But he (Jesus) said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

John 13:17 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

Point 2: Obedience is not the only source of blessing, but obedience is a guaranteed source of blessing.

Most Christians will argue that God loves everyone, especially those who invite Jesus into their heart. Since they invited Jesus into their heart many years ago, they are satisfied and at peace because that is where Jesus lives – in their heart. Once again, Jesus speaks very plainly about who the Father loves and the kind of heart in which He dwells.

John 14:23 Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."

Point 3: This verse is tough, for sure, and is deserving of much deeper study, but it seems to say that if one's heart is not an obedient heart, then it is not the dwelling place of God.

We sometimes sing a song entitled “I Am a Friend of God,” but those who are friends of God prove their friendship, not by their good behavior and regular church attendance, but by their obedience.

John 15:14 You are my friends if you do what I command you.

Point 4: This seems pretty straight forward. If a person fails or refuses to be obedient to the teachings and commands of Christ, that person is not a friend of God.

The sad thing – and the scary thing – about this is that there is coming a day of reckoning when everyone will give an account of themselves. Every person – as an individual with no other friend or relative to stand with them – will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and be judged on the basis of works.

Romans 2:5 ...on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. 6 He will render to each one according to his works: 7 to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; 8 but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.

Many will argue that this cannot be true since we are not saved on the basis of works, readily quoting [Ephesians 2:8-9](#) as their biblical support. While I and every good evangelical must agree that a person's works will not earn salvation, I must also emphasize that a person's works will prove whether what they experienced in life was true salvation or just a contented form of religion.

Point 5: Where there are no works – where there is no obedience to the Great Commission and other commands of Jesus – there never was salvation.

The invitation of Jesus is so very different from the watered-down, unbiblical invitation offered from many pulpits today.

Jesus' invitation is not "Follow me and I will feed you, clothe you, house you, keep you from harm, and make your life easy." His invitation is "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." (Matt. 4:19) Jesus calls us with the intention of making something out of those who follow.

Then He went on to add, "I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves...Men will deliver you over to courts and flog you...you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake... Following me will cause discord in your families, and some of you will be put to death by your own fathers and brothers. You will be hated by all for my name's sake. You will be delivered up to tribulation and many of you will be put to death. You will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. You will be excluded and reviled, and people will declare your name as evil because of me." ([Matt. 10:16, 17, 18, 21, 22](#); [Matt. 24:9](#); [Luke 6:22](#))

Does any of this sound similar to the invitation you heard following last week's sermon?

Finally (at least for this blog), Jesus added one more caveat to His invitation.

Matt. 16:24 *If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."*

Point 6: Contrary to what songs or preachers or Sunday School teachers may have told us, Jesus did not bear my cross or your cross or anyone else's cross to Calvary. He bore His own cross and our sins. Every Christian is called to bear his own cross, not for the purpose of salvation, but obedience, even unto death if necessary.

That is what salvation is all about.

¹ Read also [Luke 6:46-49](#).

² There are many such references in the New Testament. They are all quotes, paraphrases, or references to Psalm 118:22, Isaiah 8:14, and Isaiah 28:16. In the NT, see Matt. 21:42-44, Mark 12:10, Luke 20:17, Acts 4:11, Rom. 9:33, 1 Pet. 2:4-8. Even the stone in Daniel that "was cut out without hands," an obvious prophetic reference to the Messiah, became the foundation stone for "a great mountain" that "filled the whole earth." (Dan. 2:34-35, 45)

³ Interestingly, in Psalm 114:8, the psalmist says that God did not just cause water to flow out of a rock, but that He actually converted the rock into water. This is a great picture of what happens in conversion.

⁴ Deut. 32:15; 2 Sam. 22:3,47; Psalm 18:2, 46; 62:2,6,7; 89:26; 95:1; Isaiah 17:10

⁵ Both quotes are from notes in the [Online Bible](#).

⁶ Adam Clarke's Commentary, quoted in the Online Bible.

⁷ Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, <https://biblehub.com/matthew/7-24.htm>

⁸ Pulpit Commentary, <https://biblehub.com/matthew/7-24.htm>

⁹ The words "past" and "future" have no relevance in relationship to eternity. However, from the perspective of humankind – bound by the limitations of time and space – the terms are useful in demonstrating continuity of purpose.